∞ The most important family member may have a mantle of deer or nutria skins to keep him warm.

C M 175 291 "The men usually go about stark naked without a stitch on, although their skins are so tanned by the rough weather that they seem to be covered by animal hide or leather, particularly the old men, who are numerous, because the inclemencies of weather do not harm them, they having been used to such rigors since childhood. I saw in Santa Fé the head of a Mocobí Indian, who must have been about 40 years old, the skin of which was more than half a finger thick. The women go about entirely covered, from head to toe, in animal skins, and the principal women attire themselves in cloth made from a pliant plant larger than the agave, which in this province is called "chaguar" and grows wild. From it they make a thread similar to that used by cobblers, and then weave their clothes to which the daughters and wives of the more important men add some black and white ornamentation. From this same fibre they also make jars which, C M [445] cemented over with wax, can hold water pretty well and also the beverages with which they get drunk.

"All the women paint their faces, breasts and arms in the C M same manner as the moorish women of Africa and Spain, and those 302 175 of most consequence do this in intricate patterns which remain in ●[304] the skin permanently, for their mothers from the day they are born start to fix the dyes in their very flesh with the help of the large sharp bones of certain fish. They also use a dark blue dye, although not to such an extent, on their male children. In addition to this the mothers pluck the hair from the heads of their children of both sexes, leaving a completely bald swath three fingers wide running from the forehead to the crown of the head on which the hair never grows again. Thus do the Mocobíes, Tobas, Agoyas, Taymies and Aquilotes go about, both men and women, and the latter are extremely ugly as a consequence although, to their thinking, they are very beautiful. And in order that the women pull their hair out, the Devil is wont to appear to them in the form of an Indian woman who comes out of the nearest forest covered with a net and tells them that those who will not allow themselves to be plucked are not to eat fish, for should they do so, they will die. [577] So that if some C M woman, fearing the pain, resists having her hair pulled, she later [262] allows it so as to be able to eat fish which is their favorite food. Others of these Indian nations do not make these pathlike inroads in

342 stick them into the earth in a sloppy circle, tie the ends together with any old thing, place a little straw on top and there they have a house with the appearance of an upturned funnel. And in there do
342 these privileged beings live, with more peace and tranquility than
513 kings in their sumptuous palaces; there do they build their fires and eat; there do the men and women sleep, with their parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, and always in the company of a few dogs, on the bare ground or on a piece of reed matting, or on the skin of some wild pig they have killed, or cow they have stolen, all together in a jumble—this one with his head on his neighbor's chest, that one with his legs on some other's chest and the dogs on top of anyone who strikes them as comfortable. In this way their miserable
361 hovels soon swarm with insects and then they set fire to them and build others somewhere else—so they are forever moving into [602] new houses because those they construct are only makeshift. Furthermore they tend not to live in the same hut for long because of their habits of spending seasons now in one place now in another, according to the weather and time of year as for example: during the season of good fishing they spend weeks and months shifting continually from one section of the river to another, from the river to some stream, from the stream to some lake; in the fruit season they do the same thing."

"And so, as they are little inclined to bathing and always go
515 about dirty, and sleep piled up on each other together with their dogs,
164 they are almost always full of mange, a disease which even kills many infants. Many of them, if it should fall that they take a bath, take pleasure, while still wet, in rolling about on the river sand or in the ashes which are in their huts, as do certain animals which seem to require filth. On certain days and in certain seasons they blacken
302 their chests and faces with charcoal in order to appear more handsome or to show that they are celebrating some occasion."

"All of them cut their hair with a knife or with the teeth of fish, this for lack of scissors, which implement would have only a
• [304] limited utility among them anyway. They also customarily pierce their ears, in order to insert a piece of stick or something as a fine ornament. The men pluck out with their nails the few hairs which grow on their faces, and some also pull out their eyelashes and eyebrows."

"Both men and women dress very simply, that is, they tie to
291 their waists a piece of any old thing, such as a piece of hide or cloth

dye themselves red when they are courting, black when they wish 302
to appear dreadful, and green when celebrating some festivity.
These colors come off very easily.

While on the subject of personal adornment, I must say that 304 ●
these Indians, to a greater or lesser degree, are in the habit of 824
tattooing themselves. I have seen this carried to great lengths
among some Toba warriors, and especially among the women. It
looks something like the scars left by smallpox and is set out in
geometric designs. They do it by puncturing the skin with a [216]
large thorn coated with a caustic substance which looks like milk
and which leaves an indelible mark and remains under the
epidermis. This substance is to be found mainly in Bolivia in the
region of Santa Cruz, and is called in Guaraní iguoqui. The same
name is given to the plant from which it comes which is a vine
which produces bunches of white flowers and elongated fruit
which break open and expel a sort of dust. In order to obtain
iguoqui they cut the bunches before they ripen, and from the stalk
there exudes the milky sap used for tattooing. While the opera-
tion is in process they keep the portion of stalk submerged in water
so that its milky contents will not well out and be lost. A Chiri-
guano Indian saw one of these vines twenty leagues downstream
from the frontier with the whites on the Bermejo River in the
place called La Luna Nueva.

A custom very similar in nature to tattooing in its object 302
is the plucking of hair which is a universal activity among the
inhabitants of the Chaco and possibly among all the Indians of the
New World.

The object of this is to appear better looking, but it is
possible that the real cause has something to do with hygiene
and comfort.

Maybe they want to set themselves off in this way from the
other animals, which are covered with hair.

Meanwhile, either because they are naturally so or because
of a gradual natural selection based on their depilatory habit, [142]
the fact is that the Indians are almost completely lacking in hair
both on the body and face, and the little which does grow they
pull out, with very few exceptions.

In spite of their language's being so complete I have been 533
unable to discover canticles or any similar musical effort. All

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK6

CHAPTER II.

General characteristics and material culture.

C M 141 142 In their physical characteristics the *Choroti* and the *Mataco* show the same affinity as appears in their languages. Both of them are strongly built and of middle height, the Mataco somewhat taller than the Choroti. The average height of the former seems to be about 163 or 164 cm. for the men and 154 or 155 cm. for the women; of the latter about 162 or 163 cm. for the men and 152 or 153 cm. for the women. In their sturdy appearance the Mataco resemble the mountain Indians, and in former times there has probably been intermarriage between them and the Quichuas. The hair of both tribes is black, coarse and straggling and is worn long by both men and women, except when it is temporarily cut short for ceremonial reasons. The eyes are dark-brown; the nose somewhat flattened, and the features of the face generally irregular, especially among the Mataco. Both tribes know the custom of tattooing the face, the women being always tattooed, the men only in some cases, and never as completely as the women.

M [174]

C M [304]

T 142 114 I need not dwell upon the physical characteristics of the *Tobas* since they have been described by nearly all authors ever since Lozano. They certainly form an easily recognisable type of Indian, differing considerably from the rest of the Chaco tribes, one salient feature being their remarkably tall and strong build of body. The Tobas are in fact among the tallest of all South American Indians, being in this respect comparable with the ancient Patagonians, to whom they were probably related, as well as with the present Ona Indians of the mainland of Tierra del Fuego. The physical anthropology of the Tobas, just as that of the Mataco and the Choroti, has been studied scientifically by the German anthropologist Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche.[1])

[1]) Lehmann-Nitsche, R. *Estudios antropológicos sobre los Chiriguanos, Chorotes, Matacos y Tobas* (*Anales del Museo de La Plata*. Buenos Aires, 1908).

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

process and the other procreative functions of the woman is realized. The attainment of puberty therefore for the Indian girl certainly means the beginning of her sexual life, but at the same time it means her entrance into a very critical epoch of development, during which she is often — especially at child-birth and during the following menses — exposed to supernatural dangers. Hence the initiation ceremonies at puberty have for their object partly her direct protection against these dangers for the time being, partly her purification once for all from the evils associated with her sexual functions during the years to come or — to express it more plainly — to *harden* her against evil spirits. From this point of view we have to regard all puberty ceremonies of the Indians, even such practices as painting, scarification, and tattooing of the body or face, often undertaken with girls on the attainment of puberty.

In the dances and conjurations performed in honour of girls at puberty it is the women who, contrary to what is generally the rule in religious ceremonies, play the most prominent part. Among the *Choroti* the puberty of girls is celebrated with a magical dance called *Káusima* after the instrument which the women use for it; the instrument is called *káhuis*. The *káhuis* is a dancing-staff, two or three meters in length, made of a light kind of wood or bamboo, which has a bunch of deer's hoofs tied at the top. These rattles produce a hollow sound when the staff is struck on the ground and are supposed to possess a mysterious power to influence the spirits. This power of course must be explained from the fact that to the Choroti the deer is a demoniacal animal. The *káhuis* staff is the only magical instrument used by the Choroti women and it is never handled by the men.

The dance begins at the first new moon after the appearance of the signs of puberty, because the moon is believed to cause and have great influence upon the menstruation of women. It is performed every day until the following new moon, sometimes even still longer. At a *Káusima* dance which I witnessed the arrangement was as follows. The mother of the girl and some other elderly women formed a circle, or rather an elliptic ring, outside the hut where the girl was, each holding her rattling dancing-staff. Close to the ring four medicine-men were sitting at equal distances from one another, holding their rattle gourds (*pelíte*). There were besides two more medicine-men standing up, each provided with a drum. During the dance the women moved round ceremoniously with slow, regular steps, chanting loudly and marking time with their rattle staffs which they struck on the ground. The men outside the ring also chanted, shaking

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *M a t a c o* are much the same as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetetéih* in the Mataco language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aittáh* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *M a t a c o* and the *C h o r o t i* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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M 304 inflammation in the face the girl has to fast for some days after the operation.

M 304 751 Tattooing has a purely magical significance, as may be inferred from the fact that the Mataco and the Choroti women regard it particularly as a protection against disease. Analyzing the custom, we can distinguish at least three factors in it, all of which are associated with magical ideas: first, the scarification or bleeding itself; second, the matter (soot, ashes) rubbed into the wounds; and third, the patterns and marks incised which remain when the wounds have healed. Bleeding and scarification are common practices of purely magical significance among all Indians of South America, and as far as the Pilcomayo tribes are concerned I shall have occasion to mention this custom again in a later chapter. The very scars left after such operations are regarded as a protection against evil spirits. Further, that tattooing is done by means of ashes or soot is certainly not an accident. The use of ashes for superstitious purposes is of frequent occurrence among the Indians, the general idea being that ashes are a prophylactic against evil spirits. The custom of mixing ashes or soot with saliva is significant from the same point of view, for magical virtues are commonly ascribed to the saliva.

M [789]

M [827]

C 304 751 789 All women among the Choroti are tattooed in the same way, that is, have the same marks and patterns applied to the face, and no full-grown woman lacks this tribal characteristic. Since tattooing is regarded as a permanent protection against evil spirits and sickness, it is natural that a woman lacking it should be shunned by the men, but it is not a means of attraction or a »decoration» in the common sense of the word.

T 304 184 [362] As to the *T o b a s*, tattooing or the custom of making indelible marks on the body or the face was formerly in vogue among all Toba tribes as among all peoples of the Guaycurú-group; but the Bolivian Tobas of the present day have dropped this custom, contenting themselves with simple body painting. Tattooing among the Tobas seems to have been limited to the female sex, as indeed is the rule among the Chaco tribes. According to d'Orbigny, the Toba girls were tattooed when they attained puberty and became marriageable. Since the custom is no longer practised by the Bolivian Tobas I have not seen how it is done by them. The procedure, however, is the same as among other Chaco tribes, incisions being made in the face and ashes rubbed into the wounds. As appears from the photographs of some Toba women which Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche took in Buenos Aires in 1899 the tattooing practised by the Toba women was exceedingly elaborate and complicated.

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The custom of tattooing, as it was practised by the ancient Guaycurú is described by Father Dobrizhoffer in much the following way. The Abiponian women, says the Father, [1]) not content with the marks common to both sexes, have their face, breast, and arms covered with black figures of various shapes, so that they present the appearance of a Turkish carpet. As soon as a young woman is of age to be married, she is ordered to be marked according to custom. She reclines her head upon the lap of an old woman and is pricked. Thorns are used for a pencil, and ashes mixed with blood for paint. The old woman, sticking the points of the thorns deep into the flesh, describes various figures till the whole face streams with blood. The first day she is sent home with her face half pricked with the thorns, and is recalled the next and the next after that, to have the rest of her face, the breast, and the arms pricked in like manner. Meantime she is shut up for several days in her father's tent and wrapped in a hide that she may receive no injury from the cold air. Carefully abstaining from meat, fish, and some other sorts of food, she feeds upon nothing but a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood. [2])

From Dobrizhoffer's account it appears that tattooing was practised by the ancient Guaycurú in the same way as by the present-day Chaco tribes.

Among the puberty customs we may also, in a certain sense, reckon the perforation of the ear-lobes for the insertion of wooden plugs or tubes. The perforation takes place even before the age of puberty, when the boy or girl is five or six years old, but the wooden ornaments are inserted later and are a sign that the boy or girl in question is regarded as a man or woman. The ear-lobe is pierced with a cactus thorn by an old woman, a grass or small wooden pin being inserted so as to prevent the wound from closing. Later on bigger and bigger pins are inserted, by which the holes are more and more extended, and lastly the plug or tube, which forms one of the most prominent ornaments of the Indians. The wooden plugs which the Tobas formerly wore in their ear-lobes, were so thick and heavy that they hung nearly down to the shoulders. In our own days they are only used by the Argentine Pilága, not by the Bolivian Tobas. It is to be observed that although the ear-lobes of both sexes are perforated, the ear-plugs or tubes are among the Choroti, Mataco, and Ashluslay worn chiefly by men, seldom by women, whereas among the Tobas *only* men wear them. These ornaments seem to have chiefly a magical significance.

[1]) Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, II. 20 sq.

[2]) This fruit is evidently the tasi fruit mentioned above, which thus is still eaten by the Toba women when they have to observe ceremonial fasting.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

C 783 827 [324] resorted to before going out on a hunting expedition. If the arms fails or trembles in pulling the bow, its weakness is, according to the idea of the Choroti, due to the presence of a *mohsek* in the blood; and they think that the evil demon will leave the body with the blood drawn. The same custom is practised by other tribes of the Pilcomayo. Thus C 171 Nordenskiöld noticed it among the Ashluslay, although he did not understand its real meaning. After a trying fishing or hunting expedition, he says, the Indians may be seen to pierce their arms and legs furiously with hard wooden splinters, so that the blood flows in streams; and in order to get a keener sight to find the nests of the bees they likewise prick themselves above the eyes. In both cases the idea evidently is that the demon which causes the weakness or fatigue will be driven away from the body and perhaps killed with the pointed instrument.

M ● 304 783 The scars left by the cuts are tended with care and shown with satisfaction, indeed with pride. The Indians showed with apparent satisfaction even those cicatrices which the *palometa* fishes had inflicted on their body with their sharp teeth when they were bathing in the river. It is clear that according to the idea of the Indians not only the bleeding purges the body from impure matter and strengthens the limbs, but that the very scars which remain after the operation possess some mysterious power to keep off evil influences, a power which is much the same as that ascribed to real tattooing marks. This Indian view is especially conspicuous in regard to an operation which the whites sometimes perform upon Indians who have come in contact with European civilization, M 751 783 304 namely, vaccination. I could myself appreciate the extraordinary importance ascribed to scars when during my stay at Esperanza I vaccinated a number of Chaco Indians who were employed as labourers at the sugar factory. The Christians probably have no remedy which the natives understand so well as this one, and they therefore as a rule submitted to the vaccine inoculation without remonstration, in fact, with pleasure. The small indelible marks which remained were regarded with wonder and admiration, and it was perfectly understood that they were a sort of warranty that the terrible disease would not attack the person wearing them.

M 302 784 Of all personal ornaments *body-painting* is the most important. All Chaco tribes practise it, and men and women alike. In the Chaco, as in other parts of South America, body-painting is essentially a custom of magical significance, as one can easily find out by considering the circumstances under which it is practised. The favourite colour of the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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1. 2. 3. 4. 5 = Women's body-painting for different occasions (at menstruation etc.). 6 = Ornamental body-painting after a death. 7 = Body-painting (with charcoal) after a death (women's). 8 = War painting of the Tobas (face black with charcoal, breast and arms red with urucu).

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
[535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and he is called *kyutithli*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen painted with the same pattern. She is called *samuklandi*, because by her painting she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
[558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
548 self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
[182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes, who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the
832 neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
[533] evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
534 and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
[304] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents' house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence
583 intimate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have
836 commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
[581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of
[582] sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new